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Diana T Fritz 04/12/2007 04:28:11 PM From DB/Inbox: Diana T Fritz

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Text:

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 00603

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ACTION: AMB  
INFO: POL CONS FCS PAO ECON DCM DAO P/M

DISSEMINATION: AMB  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MSISON  
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8747  
INFO RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 6986

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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [OFDP](#) [OPRC](#) [OREP](#) [AE](#)  
SUBJECT: UAE INVITES CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS TO ABU DHABI  
AND DUBAI, APRIL 1-7, 2007

¶1. In a first-of-its-kind effort to win friends on Capitol Hill, the UAE Embassy in Washington funded the travel of eight Congressional staffers, most of them Chiefs of Staff, four Republicans and four Democrats, to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, April 1-7. The visit was low-key but offered staffers the UAE's own perspective on issues facing this Gulf state. By all indications the UAE hosts extended typical hospitality, even providing new tailored suits for the staffers' first meetings when their luggage failed to arrive.

¶2. This UAE-funded Congressional "NODEL" arrived in Abu Dhabi on the morning of April 1, receiving an hour and a half brief the same afternoon from Ambassador and members of Country Team. Later that day the group was received by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed. Other meetings included visits to the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Interior, Abu Dhabi Police, UAE Archives, and Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research.

¶3. On April 2 the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs received the group for a briefing by senior MFA officials followed by a wide-ranging discussion and lunch. UAE MFA officials included Acting U/S Tariq Al Haidan, Assistant U/S for International Cooperation Mohamed Abdul Rahim Abdul Jalil, and Director of European, American and Oceanic Affairs Ali Mohamed Al Zarouni. WashDC UAE Emboff Ahmed Al Hamili and MFA Desk Officer Rowda Al Otaiba escorted the group throughout their visit.

¶4. Subjects touched upon in the MFA's presentation and in response to Q&A from the Congressional staffers included: the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute to the region's conflicts, U.S.-UAE bilateral cooperation on several fronts, U.S. credibility issue in the Arab world, the Arab image problem in the U.S. media, the UAE's image in the U.S., UAE sensitivity about reporting on Human Rights and expatriate labor issues, UAE sensitivity about the Iranian

Presence Office in Dubai, UAE humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. "visa problem" since 9/11, the decline in numbers of UAE students studying in the U.S., and the importance of cultural programs and exchanges.

¶5. Members included: Jim B. Clark (Rep. Diane Watson, D-CA 33rd), Bill R. McBride (Rep. Vernon Ehlers, R-MI 3rd), Matt McGinley (Rep. Tom Price (R-GA 6th), Glen Downs (Rep. Walter Jones, Jr., R-NC 3rd), Christopher James Mansour (Rep. Dale E. Kildee, D-MI 5th), Robert J. McCreary (Rep. Doug Lamborn, R-CO 5th), and Kapp Johnson (Rep. James L. Oberstar, D-MN 8th).

¶6. Other UAE officials who met the group included: Assistant Deputy Minister of Labor Obaid Al Zahmi and Deputy Minister of Economy for Planning Mohamed Ahmed Abdel Aziz Al Shehi. Group meetings in Dubai, April 5-7, were with: the Dubai Executive Office, Mohammed Al Gergawi; DP World, Mohammed Sharaf and Michael Moore; the Dubai Chamber of Commerce; and members of The Federal National Council. A consulate briefing was offered, but MFA handlers could not find time in the schedule.

¶7. Media coverage of the group included five inside page articles in UAE Arabic and English newspapers, April 3, 4, 5, and 8, in semi-official Arabic daily Al Ittihad, Arabic daily Al Khaleej, and the Khaleej Times.

¶8. Comment: Indications are that this may be the first of what may be other future efforts by the UAEG to interact with Members of the U.S. Congress and staff. In some respects it proved a learning experience for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
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